



Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable populations affected by the aggravating crisis in the West Bank and Gaza

Location of operation: West Bank and Gaza

Amount of Decision: EUR 50,000,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/PSE/BUD/2006/01000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale :

Following the success of the Change and Reform's party in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections of January 2006 that resulted in the formation of a Hamas-led Palestinian government, the Government of Israel (GOI) stopped the transfer of Palestinian value added taxes (VAT) and customs taxes it is obligated to pass over to the Palestinian Authority (PA) – this accounts for around 50% of the PA budget – thus precipitating a fiscal crisis. The decision of local banks not to cooperate with the PA due to concerns over their legal liability under US anti-terror legislation is also restricting payments that the PA can make and funds that it can receive (particularly from Arab donors). The fiscal crisis is resulting in the non-payment of salaries of 152,000 PA employees who directly support another one million people, or more than 25% of the Palestinian population. At the same time, main donors have reduced various categories of foreign assistance, mainly budgetary support to the PA.

The Israeli closure policy and reduced trade flows have also weakened the fiscal position and economic activity leading to widespread food shortages and price increases with a high impact on the vulnerable population. If the current situation persists, the Palestinian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is conservatively estimated to fall by 25% by the end of 2006. The number of checkpoints has increased from 376 prior to the Israeli disengagement from Gaza to 515 in mid-May 2006, blocking Palestinian movement in the West Bank. Approximately 60,000 Palestinians cross through the checkpoints daily. The separation barrier, which already has had a profound impact on Palestinian lives, especially in terms of access to education, health care services and economic ties, nears completion in and around East Jerusalem, further restricting West Bank Palestinian access into the city. These obstacles

have further restricted access to land, markets, and services and have also impacted negatively on the humanitarian situation.

On the security front, Palestinian casualties have increased throughout the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) in the month after the election compared to the month before (at least 34 deaths compared with 15). The security situation for humanitarian actors in the WBG had reached an all-time low in March. The controversy over the publication of 12 cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten last September and the hostilities in Jericho in March sparked an unprecedented surge of kidnappings in the WBG (including one International Committee of the Red Cross staff and a number of NGO staff) and attacks against the property of the International Community. Many of DG ECHO¹'s partners had to suspend field operations temporarily owing to security concerns.

The Commission is deeply concerned with the sharp deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the increased hardship among the population in the WBG that requires an increased international response. Various UN agencies have drawn attention to the humanitarian crisis for the Palestinian population as a result of Israel's decision to withhold Palestinian clearance revenues, the aforementioned tighter closure policy and the cuts in international aid to the PA. According to the World Bank, almost half of the West Bank's inhabitants and nearly 70% of the Gaza Strip's live below the poverty line. At present around 40% of people in the West Bank lack regular access to water and food and the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that the number of people in need of food aid will have increased by 25% by the end of this month.

The Quartet in its statement of 9 May 2006 "*expressed serious concern about the deteriorating conditions (...) and expressed concern about the delivery of humanitarian assistance, economic life, social cohesion and Palestinian institutions*" and the international community has been called upon to respond to the increasing and rising humanitarian needs.

Both the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Under Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) have recently warned that the international community is facing a humanitarian and security crisis in the WBG.

Tensions and violence escalated in Israel/Occupied Territories as the Israeli military launched operations into Gaza following the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants. With the humanitarian situation looking extremely bleak and steadily worsening by the day, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and NGOs have been compelled to revise their appeals for aid to Palestinians. The ICRC and IFRC presented Mid-June a revised appeal for an additional EUR 6.4 million for the provision of health services and additional protection needs.

On 31 May 2006 the UN launched a revised UN Consolidated Appeal (CAP) upwards by 80% from EUR 168 million to EUR 300 million. The revised amount aims at alleviating the impact of soaring joblessness and collapse in family income through the creation of emergency employment and to prevent increased malnutrition through expanded food assistance to families unable to meet their caloric needs. Infants and children, who make up half of the population, are at special risk of malnutrition. The revised appeal will also attempt to revive an agricultural sector hard-hit by closures, provide essential health services

¹ Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid - ECHO
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including counselling for traumatised youth, and provide water to communities with restricted access.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) revised its 2006 Emergency Appeal, which is part of the revised CAP, appealing for an additional EUR 75.23 million, to ensure life-saving support to increasing numbers of vulnerable refugees in WBG. The initial UNRWA Emergency Appeal 2006 of EUR 74 million has been pledged for 66% as of 29 May 2006. UNRWA will expand its emergency employment programmes to provide more jobs to more refugees over the coming six months; provide food to more eligible refugee families; distribute more cash grants to refugees meeting the eligibility criteria; purchase additional medical supplies and expand the reach of mobile clinics in the West Bank; procure emergency supplies to ensure vital basic services such as water and sewage treatment can continue. Recently the Agency has witnessed a 500% increase in new applications for emergency assistance in Gaza refugee camps and anticipates that the number could continue to rise in the near term. It also expects that many refugees who relied on the PA in the past will soon be turning to them for assistance in the area of health care and education.

There is general consensus that an increased humanitarian aid response is urgently needed and should be put in place as soon as possible. If not the access of humanitarian actors and the provision of this aid will be at risk due to a deteriorated security situation.

DG ECHO has submitted for adoption in June a humanitarian aid decision for EUR 34 million for the most vulnerable populations in the ongoing crisis in WBG (EUR 29.64 million), and for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (EUR 3.77 million) to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of distributions of food parcels and provision of productive agricultural inputs; creation of emergency jobs, ensuring access to primary health care services, provision of community-based psychosocial support for children and adolescents, regaining of access to water for household and agricultural purpose, protection and coordination. Out of these EUR 34 million some EUR 28 million have been earmarked for the continuation of ongoing operations responding to earlier identified needs, while an additional EUR 6 million will be allocated to respond to newly emerging needs, especially in the sectors of food aid/security and emergency jobs. However, the EUR 29.6 million earmarked for the WBG will by no means cover the needs that DG ECHO has identified as the most urgent ones.

In this changing and highly politicized context, internationally agreed guiding principles for the delivery of humanitarian aid are all the more important. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.² EU humanitarian aid in particular must be guided by needs and not by political requirements, as it is clearly stipulated in Council Regulation 1257/96.³ In order to ensure the effective delivery of aid, humanitarian agencies should interact with all parties to ensure access and to negotiate conditions. This might entail technical contacts with PA authorities in addition to contacts with the occupying power, which remains ultimately responsible for public order, health and welfare.

The humanitarian assistance provided does not release Israel from its responsibilities as the Occupying Power. As the Occupying Power, Israel bears responsibility under International

² UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (1991)

³ Council Regulation (EC) 1257/96 of 20 June 1996, Preamble: " [...] Whereas humanitarian aid decisions must be taken impartially and solely according to the victims' needs and interests."

Humanitarian Law (IHL), particularly under the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, for the welfare of the Palestinian population in the WBG.

1.2. Identified needs:

Food

Overall, around 37% of Palestinians in the WBG were identified as food insecure at the end of 2005. The latest WFP/FAO assessment (May 2006) foresees a 14% increase in this figure by June 2006, reaching 51% food insecurity throughout, with peaks in Northern WB (Jenin, Tubas at 56%) and Southern WB (Hebron) and Northern and Southern Gaza (Gaza North and Rafah 60%). In the Gaza Strip, 47% of the population is food insecure (437,726 refugees and 199,729 non refugees). The number of people who have reduced their food intake is again greater in the Gaza strip, representing 54% overall, while in the West Bank it represents around 38% overall.

The newly food insecure caseload is estimated at 193,518 people, including refugees and non-refugees, in both the West Bank (WB) and the Gaza Strip (GS). From an estimated 1,353,711 food insecure that has been considered as a basis for the preparation of the CAP 2006, the overall caseload now reaches 1,547,229 food insecure persons.

Some 56% of the initial non refugee caseload, i.e. around 432,000 people, was covered by WFP so far. The WFP prepares to cover up to 600,000 non refugee food insecure people (an additional EUR 4.8 million from a yearly EUR 32.8 million operation).

UNRWA increases its caseload from 135,000 to 158,000 refugee families in the GS (i.e. from 625,000 to 731,000 individuals) and from 75,000 up to 82,500 families in the WB (i.e. from 450,000 to 495,000 people).

To respond to the problem of local food market disruptions, particularly in the GS and Jordan Valley, there is a need to procure and distribute local fresh food items. In 2005 the production of vegetables in Gaza totaled 54,000 tons; internal consumption 11,000 tons; leaving a surplus of 43,000 tons. This year, the Palestinian Economic Development Company estimates that 12,700 metric tons of fruits and vegetables were harvested in greenhouses between 01 January and 11 May, of which 1,600 tons has been exported. Accumulated losses now exceed EUR 8 million.

Household income

The various restrictions placed on the movement of people, labour and goods, and on the transfer of revenues collected by the Government of Israel on the PA's behalf over the last five years, has led to a contraction in real personal incomes of almost 40% between the third quarter of 2000 and the third quarter of 2005 – despite a doubling of annual donor disbursement in the same period.⁴ Furthermore, the latest statistics show that 70% of the population is living in poverty (the poverty line in 2006 stands at USD2,7 per person per day, with hardship cases living on USD1.35 per person per day or less), rising from 68% in 2005 and approximately 30% before the *Intifada*.⁵ Poverty is expected to further increase this year. Currently unemployment stands at 31% but the World Bank expects this to almost

⁴ World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza - Economic Update and Potential Outlook*, 15 March 2006

⁵ Revised Emergency Appeal oPt(CAP), 31 May 2006

double by the end of 2006.⁶ The population is currently exhausting its coping mechanism, if existing.

Water and Sanitation

Access to water remains a critical issue and is intimately related to the control exercised by the Israeli Authorities on the water sources and flow levels. The availability of water in the Palestinian communities has progressively decreased. Recent Israeli military incursions in Gaza, targeting amongst others two electrical power plants and a main water carrier, will even further reduce access to water in Gaza. Palestinians in the West Bank have access to less than a quarter (24%) of their only water source (the mountain aquifer system).⁷ The average water supply in the West Bank is about 63 l/c/d and 140 l/c/d in the Gaza Strip.⁸ The communities not connected to water networks are normally supplied through the Israeli water company Mekorot. Of the 293 West Bank Palestinian communities supplied by Mekorot, 184 communities (64%) experienced a significant decrease in water quantities (WaSH MP, July 2005).⁹ Currently implemented interventions in the water sector mainly aim at regaining physical and financial access to water by relieving the pressure from the household budget due to the increased cost of water, by repairing and rehabilitating existing infrastructure and by constructing rainwater harvesting cisterns. However, in the emerging crisis - summer period is starting in one month - the problems of access to water will require the set up of rapid response capacities and the implementation of emergency water and sanitation interventions.

Health

The increased number of physical obstacles, movement permits and road barriers blocking movement in the West Bank in combination with an increase in the number of Palestinians living in poverty continue to seriously restrict their physical and financial access to health care. The Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) is currently exhausting its strategic stocks of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. All overhead costs remain unmet. If this situation persists, the health system will not be able to continue to function and the Palestinian population will no longer have access to health care services.

Protection

It is evident that a worsened humanitarian and security situation demands strengthened and reinforced protection activities. The ICRC launched on 12/06/06 a revised emergency appeal for an amount of EUR 6.4 million. The appeal which aims at strengthening the ICRC's protection mandate, covers part of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society appeal (PRCS) plus a rapid reaction mechanism for watsan projects and additional protection interventions. In terms of the PRCS appeal, there are hard pledges from national Red Cross societies (Netherlands, Canada, UK) and "soft" pledges from Norway and Sweden. Excluding the latter, the PRCS appeal is covered at a rate of 65% already, though the ICRC share (40%) is not planned to be covered by any pledge so far.

1.3. Target population and regions concerned

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ CARE, *The Access to Water in the Palestinian Territories: A study of the Ya'bad area*, 2004

⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Consolidated Appeals Process oPt*, November 2005

This decision will target more than 1,500,000 people, the most vulnerable and poorest segments of the Palestinian population in the WBG.

1.4. Risk assessment and possible constraints

In the WBG, Israeli security and other measures were tightened following the PLC election and as internal insecurity increases it can be feared that Israel may respond with a further tightening of external closures, which will result in further decline of the Palestinian economy, rising tensions with Palestinian society and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. In light of this it can also be expected that there will be an increase in Israeli incursions and military operations. Since the elections, the number of Palestinian killings and injuries has already increased.

Internal closures are likely to continue to increase. Since the Israeli disengagement from Gaza the number of physical obstacles restricting internal movement within the West Bank has steadily increased and in addition the number of flying checkpoints has continued to increase in the weeks following the PLC elections from already high levels reported prior to the elections. In line with the perceived increase in the security threat it is also likely that Israel imposes tighter restrictions on the movement of goods in and out of Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The continuing construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem generates additional humanitarian needs, thus increasing the total cost of interventions aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the affected population and decreasing the availability of funds for other areas where needs are great in the WBG.

Factionalism is likely to increase and rising family and clan fights, particularly in Gaza Strip, already create further unrest. The overall insecurity situation is likely to affect staff from the international organizations and make movement for humanitarian workers more difficult.

It is assumed that co-ordinated international advocacy on issues of general interest (protection, access, entry, etc.) will be able to continue in order, inter alia, for humanitarian operators to perform their tasks without major disruptions. It is also assumed that the Civil Administration of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) will function properly and maintain the relevant liaison mechanisms allowing for the effective and timely delivery of humanitarian relief by international organizations and NGOs.

In order to avoid channeling funds through the PA, some donors have considered a possible provision of aid exclusively through the UN and NGOs. However, the following should be noted: since Oslo (1993), donors have supported the establishment and development of the PA to provide services to the population, which have been previously administered through the Israeli military authorities. The PA delivers the vast bulk of public services. It would be difficult to increase emergency assistance levels quickly if humanitarian aid flows would require new verification procedures and the creation of a parallel structure. International humanitarian agencies do not have the mandate or the capacities to take over the running of PA services, even if the security situation would allow for it.¹⁰

⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Consolidated Appeals Process oPt*, November 2005

¹⁰ Ibid.

Consistent with the Middle East Quartet Statement of 9 May, the EC is developing a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) which should ensure direct delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. The EC's humanitarian aid and the TIM are complementary. This mechanism is focusing on essential services, the provision of equipment and supplies and social allowances to individuals. DG ECHO and DG AIDCO closely coordinate their interventions.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed:¹¹

2.1. Objectives :

Principal objective is to provide assistance to Palestinian populations affected by the crisis in the WBG.

Specific objectives:

1. To address the humanitarian needs resulting from a loss of income of vulnerable Palestinian households in the WBG through the provision of food and household income;
2. To address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population in the WBG, affected by the deterioration of the public services, through the provision of assistance in the fields of water sanitation, health and protection.

2. - Components :

Food

WFP will provide food aid to the Palestinian *non refugee* caseload for a period of 6 months. WFP's revised emergency appeal totals EUR 20.8 million. There is a high probability that the USAID pledge to the new poor caseload will materialize. DG ECHO shall focus its support through WFP on social hardship cases and social institutions in the WBG.

UNRWA will provide food aid to the extended refugee caseload of 158,000 families in GS (3 distribution rounds: June/July, September/October and November/December) and 82,500 families in the WB (2 distribution rounds: August and October). One additional round to the extended caseload (for which there is no pledge at the moment) would amount to EUR 5.38 million. One round in the WB is estimated at EUR 3.6 million. DG ECHO foresees to support one additional round for the WB and one for GS.

30% of bulk quantities of fruits and vegetables shall be purchased from farmers' associations, using existing logistics and facilities, and distributing these food items to institutions and/or vulnerable families. These kind of operations would allow to (1) provide an income for farmers that cannot sell nor export their production due to lack of cash at household level and

¹¹ Grants for the implementation of humanitarian aid within the meaning of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid are awarded in accordance with the Financial Regulation, in particular Article 110 thereof, and its Implementing Rules in particular Article 168 thereof (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002, OJ L248 of 16 September 2002 and No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002, OJ L 357 of 31 December 2002). Rate of financing: In accordance with Article 169 of the Financial Regulation, grants for the implementation of this Decision may finance 100% of the costs of an action.

Humanitarian aid operations funded by the Commission are implemented by NGOs and the Red Cross organisations on the basis of Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) (in conformity with Article 163 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation) and by United Nations agencies based on the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA). The standards and criteria established in DG ECHO's standard Framework Partnership Agreement to which NGO's and International organisations have to adhere and the procedures and criteria needed to become a partner may be found at http://europa.eu/comm/echo/partners/index_en.htm

closures; (2) maintain activity for companies of the logistics chain (packing and trucking) largely affected by the current crisis; (3) provide a food supplement for social institutions (hospitals, schools, etc) and/or vulnerable families. It would not be very complicated to put in place such a mechanism; but it requires a tight beneficiary selection (both farmers and vulnerable households) and a proper monitoring and control mechanism.

Household income

DG ECHO foresees to respond to the loss of income of 21,825 needy families (or 130,950 persons) through supporting notably cash for work operations carried out mainly through UNWRA.

Water and sanitation

Within the crisis context, and in addition to the repair and rehabilitation of existing water infrastructure, tankered water shall be provided to most vulnerable families that are water insecure. To increase the ability and capacity to quickly respond to problems of access to drinking water, rapid response capacities shall be put in place.

Health

DG ECHO envisages supporting the coverage of primary health care, essential drugs supply as well as the provision of specific pharmaceuticals for mental health related pathologies in order to allow proper assistance to this particularly vulnerable kind of patients. Implementing modalities will be the same as agreed under the financial decision adopted on 6 July 2006, including technical contacts with the MoH on the lowest possible level.

Considering the numerous stakeholders, both at donor level as well as at the level of implementing agencies, that are currently involved in the initiation of this emergency health response it will be crucial to enhance the operational coordination mechanisms. WHO shall be supported for the provision of urgently needed medical supplies and the set up of an additional rapid response capacity. At the same time a minimum of resources should be made available to WHO to keep the mental health embryonic structure in function. Access to primary health care shall be reinforced through a geographical expansion of ongoing primary health care operations in order to cover an additional 150,000 direct beneficiaries.

Protection

DG ECHO intends to increase its support of the ICRC's protection mandate, with a special focus on the PRCS appeal and rapid water and sanitation reaction mechanisms.

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision:

Given the overall volatile security situation in the affected areas, and the above described reinforced movement restrictions imposed by the IDF on both persons and goods, which had seriously hampered the implementation of humanitarian operations and the movement of humanitarian personnel, it is crucial that the implementation period covered by this decision is adequate to ensure the completion of all operations taking into account possible delays or halt of the activities. Therefore, the duration for the implementation of this decision will be 18 months. Humanitarian operations funded by this decision must be implemented within this period.

Considering current circumstances, including security concerns and the need to avoid major disruptions in ongoing and planned operations, expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from the 1 July 2006.

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms.

Donors in PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, OCCUPIED the last 12 months					
1. EU Members States (*)		2. European Commission		3. Others	
	EUR		EUR		EUR
Austria		DG ECHO	2,069,000		
Belgium	3,580,000	Other services			
Cyprus					
Czech republic					
Denmark	10,107,240				
Estonia					
Finland	3,100,000				
France	1,353,127				
Germany	805,000				
Greece					
Hungary					
Ireland	3,200,000				
Italy					
Latvia					
Lithuania					
Luxemburg	149,215				
Malta					
Netherlands	2,993,810				
Poland					
Portugal					
Slovakia					
Slovenie					
Spain	3,790,000				
Sweden	5,379,759				
United kingdom					
Subtotal	34,458,151	Subtotal	2,069,000	Subtotal	0
		Grand total	36,527,151		

Dated : 15/06/2006

(*) Source : DG ECHO 14 Points reporting for Members States. <https://hac.ec.europa.eu>
Empty cells means either no information is available or no contribution.

6 - Amount of decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the decision: EUR 50,000,000

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>To provide assistance to Palestinian populations affected by the crisis in the WBG</i>				
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Activities	Potential partners¹²
Specific objective 1: To address the humanitarian needs resulting from a loss of income of vulnerable Palestinian households in the WBG through the provision of food and household income	30,000,000	WBG	Food, Household Income	- CARE - AUT - COOPI - MERCY CORPS SCOTLAND - OXFAM - UK - UN - UNRWA - UN - WFP-PAM - CISP - CRIC
Specific objective 2: To address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population in the WBG, affected by the deterioration of the public services, through the provision of assistance in the fields of water sanitation, health and protection	17,720,000	WBG	Health, Water and Sanitation, Protection	- ACH- ESP - CARE - AUT - CROIX-ROUGE - CICR- ICRC - CH - MERLIN - OXFAM - UK - WHO - OMS
Contingency reserve, max. 10% of the total amount	2,280,000			
TOTAL:	50,000,000			

¹² ACCION CONTRA EL HAMBRE, (ESP), CARE OESTERREICH - VEREIN FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSZUSAMMENARBEIT UND HUMANITÄRE HILFE, COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE (CICR), COOPERAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE (ITA), MEDICAL EMERGENCY RELIEF INTERNATIONAL (GBR), MERCY CORPS SCOTLAND (GBR), OXFAM (GB), UNITED NATIONS - WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN NEAR EAST, WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION - ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE

7 - Evaluation

Under article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid the Commission is required to "regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations." These evaluations are structured and organised in overarching and cross cutting issues forming part of DG ECHO's Annual Strategy such as child-related issues, the security of relief workers, respect for human rights, gender. Each year, an indicative Evaluation Programme is established after a consultative process. This programme is flexible and can be adapted to include evaluations not foreseen in the initial programme, in response to particular events or changing circumstances. More information can be obtained at:

http://europa.eu/comm/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm.

8 - Budget Impact article 23 02 01

-	CE (EUR)
Initial Available Appropriations for 2006	470,429,000
Supplementary Budgets	90,000,000
Transfers	-
Total Available Credits	560,429,000
Total executed to date (by 26/07/2006)	418,017,000
Available remaining	142,412,000
Total amount of the Decision	50,000,000

A reinforcement of EUR 50,000,000 has been received from the Emergency Aid Reserve to cover the funding of this Decision.

COMMISSION DECISION
of
on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Union in the West Bank and Gaza

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,
Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid¹³, and in particular Article 15(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Nearly six years of conflict, the policy of closures and restrictions on movements, as well as the ongoing construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem, have led to a serious breakdown, affecting every aspect of daily life and stretching to a breaking point the living conditions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza;
- (2) The suspension of the monthly transfer of revenues which the Government of Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian National Authority and a reduction of various categories of foreign assistance as well as further restrictions of Palestinian labour access to Israel and the Israeli settlements, and a reduced flow of imports and exports across Palestinian borders with Israel will contribute to a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza;
- (3) The humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the overall security situation, a renewed tightening of closures and movement restrictions, is worsening on a daily basis and the international community is faced with an explosive security and humanitarian crisis;
- (4) An increased humanitarian aid response is urgently needed and should be put in place as soon as possible. If not the access of humanitarian actors and the provision of this aid will be at risk due to a deteriorated security situation. It is essential to make food, temporary jobs, water and sanitation, shelter and health services available, as well as to provide protection;
- (5) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that humanitarian aid operations should be financed by the Community for a period of 18 months;

¹³ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6
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- (6) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 50,000,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Union is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza , taking into account the available budget, other donors-contributions and other factors;
- (7) In accordance with Article 17 (3) of Regulation (EC) No.1257/96, the Humanitarian Aid Committee gave a favourable opinion on 28 July 2006.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of EUR 50,000,000 for humanitarian aid operations to populations affected by the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, by using line 23 02 01 of the 2006 general budget of the European Union.
2. In accordance with article 2 of Council Regulation No.1257/96, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objectives:
 - To address the humanitarian needs resulting from a loss of income of vulnerable Palestinian households in the West Bank and Gaza through the provision of food and household income;
 - To address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza, affected by the deterioration of the public services, through the provision of assistance in the fields of water sanitation, health and protection.

The amounts allocated to each of these specific objectives are listed in the annex to this decision

Article 2

Without prejudice to the use of the contingency reserve, the Commission may, where this is justified by the humanitarian situation, re-allocate the funding levels established for one of the specific objectives set out in Article 1(2) to another objective mentioned therein, provided that the re-allocated amount represents less than 20% of the global amount covered by this Decision.

Article 3

1. The duration for the implementation of this decision shall be for a maximum period of 18 months, starting on 1 July 2006.
2. Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 July 2006.

3. If the operations envisaged in this Decision are suspended owing to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this Decision.

Article 4

1. The amount of EUR 50.000.000 has been mobilised from the Emergency Aid Reserve and transferred to the Humanitarian Aid budget line (23 02 01).
2. This Decision shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission
Member of the Commission

Annex: Breakdown of allocations by specific objectives

Principal objective : to provide assistance to Palestinian populations affected by the crisis in the WBG	
Specific objectives	Amount per specific objective (EUR)
To address the humanitarian needs resulting from a loss of income of vulnerable Palestinian households in the WBG through the provision of food and household income;	30.000.000
To address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population in the WBG, affected by the deterioration of the public services, through the provision of assistance in the fields of water sanitation, health and protection.	17.720.000
Contingency Reserve	2.280.000
TOTAL	50.000.000